

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Big Stone School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-06**

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Dates of On Site Visit: December 19, 2005

Date of Report: January 30, 2006

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Data Sources used:

Data sources used:

- State table G – Disabling Conditions
- State table H – Exiting Information

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent/Teacher report forms
- Initial referral

Meets requirements

The Big Stone School District has an established and effectively implemented ongoing child find system to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities, ages birth through 21 years, who may need special education.

The district has no private schools; however, if the district did, it would provide for children with disabilities that are eligible for special education and are voluntarily enrolled in private schools by their parents to participate in services in accordance with the requirements of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Based on a review of district standardized test data, student files, and district tables provided by the state department, the district uses data-based decision making procedures to review and analyze school district level data to determine if the school district/agency is making progress toward the state's performance goals and indicators. It was noted that the Big Stone City Elementary School was named a Distinguished School under the NCLB for two consecutive years. The Big Stone School District was named a Distinguished District this year, as the Middle School met the requirements for this award, as well. Also, according to the test data that was reviewed, no students with disabilities took alternative assessments. Not one student in the entire district scored "below basic."

The district has not had a student receive a long-term suspension or expulsion. However, if this should occur, the district would review and analyze discipline data and revise policies/procedures if significant discrepancies were to occur between the long-term suspension and expulsion rates for children with and without disabilities.

Based on the district policies and practices regarding employment and supervision of staff employed or with whom the district contracts, an adequate supply of personnel are employed who are appropriately supervised and fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. The district also has policies and practices in place to determine personnel development needs and to take appropriate action to meet those identified needs.

Needs improvement

The steering committee determined, based on student file reviews, survey results, and teacher report forms, that the district needs to improve the pre-referral and referral system within the district to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay. Prior to the self assessment process, referral documents were not always present, and when present, were not always complete. Staff has now been trained on how to document their pre-referral activities and to make sure the process moves on more quickly. Staff has also been made more aware of the fact that not all kids who have difficulty in school have special needs, so teachers must first try several documented interventions in their classrooms before a referral for special education is made. The teachers have been encouraged to make better use of the Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) system.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for Principle One: General Supervision, as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as needs improvement for Principle One: General Supervision, as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Number of children screened, preschool and school age
- Student progress data
- Personnel training
- Needs assessment information

Meets requirements

Based on parent surveys, staff surveys, state tables, and preschool screening records, the steering committee determined that the school district does provide a free and appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities. The district has no students with disabilities that have been suspended for more than 10 days or expelled. The comprehensive plan outlines the procedure to follow if it would be necessary.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for Principle Two: Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Needs assessment
- List of tests currently used in the district
- Needs assessment information
- Surveys

- General curriculum information
- Comprehensive Plan

Meets requirements

Based on student file reviews and staff surveys, the steering committee determined the school district provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation and reevaluation. Based on student file reviews, the district ensures the evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements. Student file reviews indicated proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. Based on student file reviews and staff surveys, the steering committee concludes reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

Needs improvement

An area identified as needs improvement, based on student file reviews, is functional assessment. The district has implemented procedures to ensure functional assessments are completed (i.e. classroom work samples).

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Three: Appropriate Evaluation meets the requirements, with the exception of determination of needed evaluation data, preplacement evaluation, and evaluation procedures. See information under: Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

The monitoring team addresses functional assessment under: Out of Compliance.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04:02. Determination of needed evaluation data

As part of an evaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine whether the child has a disability, and determine whether the child needs special education and related services, as appropriate, shall review existing evaluation data on the child, including: evaluations and information provided by the parents of the child; current classroom-based assessments and observations; and observations by teachers and related services providers. Interviews with staff indicate they were not familiar with this requirement. File reviews completed by the team indicated parental input into the evaluation process was not documented.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:03 Preplacement evaluation

Before any action is taken concerning the initial placement of a child with disabilities in a special education program, a full and individual evaluation of the child's educational needs must be conducted in accordance with the requirements. Evaluations must be completed within 25 school days after receipt by the district of signed parent consent to evaluate, unless other timelines are agreed to by the school administration and the parents. The monitoring team found parent signed consent to extend timelines; however, the date to which the timeline was extended was not documented.

ARSD 24:05:25:04.5 Evaluation procedures

The district is required to ensure at a minimum that evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by parents, that may assist in determining: whether the child is a child with a disability and the content of the IEP.

Through an interview and file reviews, the monitoring team concluded functional assessment is not being completed. An interview with special education staff indicated functional assessment consists of verbal input from the general education teachers. There is no written data to provide relevant information that directly assists persons in determining the educational needs of the student. Once the information is gathered, the district needs to analyze the information to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in specific skill areas, which can then be used, if appropriate, in a student's present level of performance on the IEP.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Surveys
- Parental rights document
- Comprehensive plan
- Needs assessment
- Consent/Prior Notice forms
- Review of access logs
- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure

Meets requirements

In the student files reviewed by the district, the Individual Education Program (IEP) front page indicates parents received a copy of parent rights and it was reviewed. Parent surveys indicated they have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. The school district's comprehensive plan outlines procedures to ensure the rights of children if no parent is identified.

The school district's comprehensive plan provides procedures on procedural safeguards, which provides the parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education. The comprehensive plan outlines policies and procedures for responding to complaints and due process hearing.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Four: Procedural Safeguards, meets requirements, with the exception of consent for evaluation. See information under: Out of Compliance

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent

Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and

related services. The monitoring team did not find consent for evaluations administered to students. For example, an achievement evaluation was administered but was not included on the prior notice/consent signed by the parent, and a behavior evaluation was administered without prior notice/consent from the parents.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Student progress data
- Needs assessment information

Meets requirements

Based on student file reviews, comprehensive plan, and the parent rights brochure, the district ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings, and includes all required content. Data also supports the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. Student file reviews and parent surveys indicated the IEPs contain required content. The comprehensive plan outlines proper procedures, which ensures that appropriate IEPs are developed for students.

Needs improvement

Based on student file reviews and parent surveys, the committee determined that the district does have the required content on all IEPs with the exception of written parental input on present levels of performance, along with the lack of linking functional assessment to the present level of performances. Parental input and functional assessments have always been considered in the IEP process, but have not been properly documented. However, since initiating the self-assessment process, the district is working towards improving in these two areas as the continuous improvement monitoring process continues.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Five: Individualized Education Program (IEP), meets requirements, except in the areas of present level of performance, and transition. See information under: Needs Improvement and Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

Through file reviews and interview with staff, the monitoring team concluded transition plans are completed. However, the district may benefit from a visit from their state regional Transition Liaison to explore student options and possibility in this area.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP);

Present level of performance, goals and objectives

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment

information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In student file reviews, present levels of performance did not consistently contain the required content (i.e. specific skill area(s) affected by the student's disability, to include strengths and needs, along with how the disability affects the student's involvement in the general curriculum). Parental input was consistently documented in the present levels of performance. File reviews and interviews with staff indicated a need to improve functional assessments to acquire the needed information to develop present levels of performance for students eligible for special education services.

The annual goals need to be measurable and reasonable to attain in one year. In files reviewed, the annual goals were not written in a manner that would be measurable. The following is an example: "Student will improve organizational and study skills so he/she is able to work independently."

The short-term objective or annual goals need to have conditions, performance and criteria listed. The short-term objectives lacked these elements. The following is an example: "Given various behavioral situations, student will identify how his/her behavior affects others." No criteria is stated.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State table F - Placement Alternatives
- District's comprehensive plan
- Staff surveys
- File reviews
- General curriculum information
- Needs assessment

Meets requirements

Based on review of data in state tables, teacher surveys, student file reviews, and the comprehensive plan, the steering committee concluded all children receive services in the least restrictive environment with the supports they need for their successful participation

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The review team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Six: Least Restrictive Environment.